



Rage Over North Village Proposal

Kirsten Shaw

Courier Staff

Heber sales have risen to the top in Utah—the city's growth kindling the flames of consumerism. Since 1995, there has been a 66 percent rise from \$54 million to more than \$94 million in direct sales. This growth has ignited officials to propose expansion, and some are concerned the fires could burn out of control—the county's growth quenching the city's.

Wasatch County Commissioners met in an open forum July 31 to discuss a proposed new special service district, the North Village, which lies about three miles north of Heber. County Attorney Derek Pullan submitted a resolution of intent. Sixteen property owners in the proposed district have filed a petition backing the formation. Legally, if 50 percent of the qualified voters of the proposed territory file a written protest by August 15, the proposal must be abandoned. Commissioners will review public comment and likely decide on the new district at the next meeting. Apparently, there is some confusion.

Some residents are concerned a new district means the area will be re-zoned for commercial use. However, the commission has a long way to go before the commercial zoning is considered.

County Commissioner Mike Kohler wants to clarify the process.

"Once the district is approved, the developers interested in commercial zoning will present projects," said Kohler. "There will be no zone changes until projects are presented. We want to see the product (developers) are going to produce first so they are tied to it. The whole hearing process in three times deep." If the district is formed, the Planning Commission and County Commission would discuss zoning during a minimum of four meetings. Kohler is aware of the public's concern over commercial zoning and wants to reassure Heber businesses the Commission is working to keep Main Street a viable resource. Kohler purports the Commission will balance the needs of property owners at the North Village site with downtown businesses.

"Palms are being greased," declares Heber's Water From the Moon Owner Myle Walsh. "I'd like to see them start taking care of what they have. Main Street is a mess-ugly, not charming, no parking, dangerous streets, and no continuity. Anytime the County

Commission wants to do a service district they've done nothing but mess it up and be corrupt. The county needs to first help the city a little bit."

Zions Bank Vice President Nelson Carter is waiting to see a final proposal regarding potential commercial zoning before commenting. Carter did say, "We've got to be careful not to harm commercial business on Main Street. The main concern is to protect established businesses." He said the proposal is a "moving target right now".

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Zion's Bank Vice President Nelson Carter

Heber City's Planning Director Allan Fawcett doesn't see a need for a new service district, calling it "outrageous". He recounts a purported letter sent to property owners in the district area by the Planning Commission threatening them to support the district or risk losing future plan approval. Fawcett added the county told landowners their land would be worth ten times the amount with high-density housing or commercial zoning to peak interest. His biggest concern is a "hodgepodge" of growth scattered throughout the valley creating urban sprawl in "virgin" territory. The Director cites expense as a deterrent, claiming services are cheaper in cities with existing infrastructures.

"This would be expensive, poor policy and bad planning," said Fawcett. "It is clumsy for counties to act like cities. Areas become under served. Grow from the inside out. Don't leapfrog." Fawcett recently met with the Main Street business owners who he said are "very concerned". He said Heber is just beginning to develop progressively, and added several retail businesses slated to go in Heber are waiting to see the outcome of the North Village, hoping to build near the proposed Utah Valley State College (UVSC) campus.

Fawcett said a lot of people are disturbed about the new district, being a taxing entity that can purchase bonds at reduced rates, would offer low interest loans to businesses in the potentially rezoned area. "This smacks of govern-

ment subsidy and super breaks," he asserts.

Kohler said this is a common misconception.

"This is not a financing tool for anyone," Kohler promises. "The county will not provide bonding for them. They're going to finance this on their own."

Commissioners have asked Heber's Chamber of Commerce Economic Development Office's Robyn Pearson to research growth to assist their decision. Pearson said it is "tough to measure". He said the affect of new businesses going into the North Village would depend on whether "they are carving up the pie into smaller pieces or providing resources currently not available, which would enlarge the pie." Pearson added Heber sales are climbing upward and the city has not seen the "dips and falls" others have seen.

The Homestead's Britt Mathwick thinks local government should promote established businesses first. He said new ventures do affect businesses in the short term, but a larger commercial base would benefit everyone eventually. Mathwick's opinion of the North Village Special Service District? "One right outside of Heber City that could be annexed may not make sense.

UVSC Dean Barbara Von Diether signed the formation proposal petition to be a "good neighbor" but added, "we are obviously concerned". Von Diether wants to ensure students have a quiet place to study and reflect. "If it is surrounded by the wrong kind of growth it will destroy the kind of natural environment that exists. The Dean doubts the county will allow commercial development near the college and would prefer residential housing.

A Heber business owner who prefers to remain anonymous said the district would not be in the best interest of the valley and hopes business remains centralized. He said he needs to learn more about the proposal. "In the long run it would hurt the valley and turn us into another Provo or Salt Lake area."

Walsh is more adamantly against the district and commercial zoning.

"It would affect the city I want to live in. I'd prefer to see the county support individually owned businesses, not attract big corporations that put people out of business," Walsh said. Why do people want to live here? Because those things aren't here. I don't mind driving 25 minutes to a Wal-Mart." 22



BUSINESS

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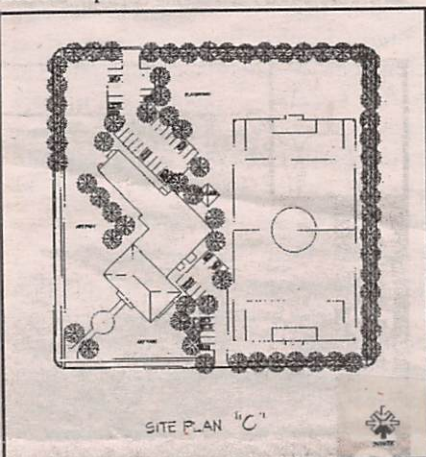
ATION

School District Does Work And Creates New Old North School

exhibition of art, provide green space, recreational facilities and parking spaces that would not interfere with the architectural design.

The School District needed a new alternative high school, facilities for high school special education programs and new district administrative offices. They also wanted a facility that could be paid for in phases so that requesting additional funds from taxpayers would not be necessary.

With the community's wish list and the school district's needs in mind, architectural designers set out to create a dynamic multi-use center. Here's what the new plan looks like:



The Old North School renovation

Phase I will consist of renovation of the first and second floors of the original building, the park and part of the computer lab. The first floor will have a multi-purpose community meeting and conference center and a community computer lab. The second floor will house the new school district offices. Phase I will cost about one million dollars and construction is expected to begin in December of this year.

Phase II will include renovation of the 1950 addition and the third floor of the original building. Construction will begin in two to three years when funds are available.

Phase III will add a basketball court and completion of the third floor office space.

Funding of the project has required some innovative planning as well. The School District has a huge jump start on the project because it owns the entire block free and clear. The one million dollars needed for Phase I construction has been saved through aggressive bidding on other school district projects.

The Utah Heritage Foundation also has an interest in helping raise funds for future phases of the renovation, according to Kirk Huffaker, Community Service Director. "We would be happy indeed to assist the Wasatch School District or the citizens of Heber Valley in raising private funds or locating grants from private foundations. The restoration of this school is a wonderful project," he said.

Dr. Talbot expects that the Conference Center will be effectively used for school and business conferences and will generate revenue that can be used to help fund construction of future phases. He is also pleased because the school district will benefit from lower overhead costs for their administrative offices. These new offices will also free up needed space at other schools where district offices are now housed.

During the fall, the architectural plans will be on display at the school district office and Dr. Talbot invites the public to view and comment on the plans. A public presentation of the plans will be announced later this fall. **W**

ACADEMIC PROFILE

TAWNYA RAWLINGS

Tawnya is a graduate of Wasatch High School, and she went on to get her bachelor degree from Utah State University where she majored in philosophy.

Tawnya is from Heber and is about to begin law school at the University of Utah.

She has been taking on two jobs, one at the Homestead and one as the office manager for the Courier. She is leaving us for greener pastures.

We will miss you. **W**



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